

ISTANBUL SUMMIT DECLARATION

SUM.DOC/2/99
19 November 1999

Original: ENGLISH

ISTANBUL SUMMIT DECLARATION

1. We, the Heads of State or Government of the participating States of the OSCE, have assembled in Istanbul on the eve of the twenty-first century and of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. Since we last met we have transformed the OSCE to meet unprecedented challenges. When we met in Lisbon, the first large-scale OSCE field operation had just been established, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the three intervening years, we have increased dramatically the number and size of our field operations. Our common institutions have grown in number and in the level of their activities. The OSCE has expanded the scale and substance of its efforts. This has greatly strengthened the OSCE's contribution to security and co-operation across the OSCE area. We pay special tribute to the women and men whose dedication and hard work have made the Organization's achievements possible.

2. Today, we adopted a Charter for European Security in order to strengthen security and stability in our region and improve the operational capabilities of our Organization. We task the OSCE Permanent Council to take the necessary decisions to implement promptly the new steps agreed upon in this Charter. We need the contribution of a strengthened OSCE to meet the risks and challenges facing the OSCE area, to improve human security and thereby to make a difference in the life of the individual, which is the aim of all our efforts. We reiterate unreservedly our commitment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to abstain from any form of discrimination. We also reiterate our respect for international humanitarian law. We pledge our commitment to intensify efforts to prevent conflicts in the OSCE area, and when they occur to resolve them peacefully. We will work closely with other international organizations and institutions on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security, which we adopted as a part of our Charter.

3. The situation in Kosovo, FRY, in particular the humanitarian situation, remains a major challenge for the OSCE. Our thoughts still go out to the large number of Kosovo Albanians and others who lost their lives, those who saw their property destroyed and the hundreds of thousands who were expelled from and abandoned their homes. Now most of these refugees have returned. As the difficult work of

rehabilitation advances, remaining refugees will be able to return. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo forms an essential part of the broader United Nations Mission working under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. The OSCE Mission today has more than 1,400 staff members, and plays a vital role in the process of rebuilding a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo; the first class from the OSCE Police School has graduated, and the OSCE training of judicial and administrative personnel has started. The Organization assists in developing a civil society, in supporting the formation of a pluralistic political party landscape, free media and a viable NGO community. The OSCE plays a leading role in promoting and protecting human rights, and establishing respect for the rule of law. The success of this work is essential if democracy is to take root. We pledge to give it our full support. As we advance in these areas, we accelerate our work towards creating the necessary conditions for the first free elections in Kosovo, which the OSCE has been tasked to organize. We will seek to involve the local population increasingly in the efforts of the OSCE Mission.

4. Against the background of years of repression, intolerance and violence in Kosovo, the challenge is to build a multi-ethnic society on the basis of substantial autonomy respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, pending final settlement in accordance with UNSCR 1244. We expect this Resolution to be fully implemented and strictly adhered to by all concerned. We will assist all inhabitants of Kosovo. But they, and those who aspire to be their leaders, must work together towards a multi-ethnic society where the rights of each citizen are fully and equally respected. They must fight decisively against the cycle of hate and revenge and bring about reconciliation among all ethnic groups. Over the recent months, we have witnessed a new exodus from Kosovo, this time of Serbs and other non-Albanians. The necessary conditions must be restored so that those who have fled recently can return and enjoy their rights. Those who fought and suffered for their rights must now stand up for the equal rights of others. We firmly reject any further violence and any form of ethnic discrimination. Failure to oppose such acts will affect the security of the region.

5. The democratic shortcomings in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remain one of the fundamental sources of grave concern in the region. The leaders and people of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must put the country firmly on the path towards

democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. When conditions permit, the OSCE stands ready to assist in order to accelerate democratization, promote independent media and hold free and fair elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We emphasize our desire to see the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a full partner. Real progress towards democracy will be a positive step towards equal participation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the international community, including in the OSCE, and will create a new basis for growth and prosperity.

6. We remain committed to a democratic, multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina based on the General Framework Agreement for Peace. We underline the importance of improving the functioning of common institutions, and of the continued assumption by those and other institutions of tasks undertaken by the international community. We expect Bosnia and Herzegovina to rapidly adopt the permanent election law, so that it can be implemented prior to the general elections scheduled for the autumn of 2000. We appeal to all the leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina to take decisive steps towards bringing its two entities closer together and to create a situation where persons, goods and services can circulate freely within a single State to the benefit of stability and prosperity. We underline the importance of respect for the rule of law and of vigorous efforts to fight organized crime and corruption, which constitute a great threat to economic reform and prosperity. We remain committed to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular minority returns.

7. We underscore the importance of working with Croatian authorities to intensify efforts towards reconciliation in Croatia. The OSCE pledges to continue its assistance to a multi-ethnic Croatia through post-war confidence-building and reconciliation. We look forward to faster progress towards the return of refugees and displaced persons and the implementation of relevant international standards, particularly those related to equal treatment without regard to ethnicity, freedom of the media, and free and fair elections. The OSCE's police monitoring in the Danubian region of Croatia, which has played a valuable role in protecting the rights of individuals, demonstrates the OSCE's ability to develop new operational capabilities quickly and efficiently.

8. We reaffirm our commitment to assist Albania as it continues its social, political and economic reform process following the setbacks caused by the upheaval of 1997 and

the Kosovo refugee crisis of 1999. Noting the recent progress, we call upon the Government and all political parties to improve the political atmosphere, thereby strengthening democratic institutions. We encourage the new Government of Albania to continue its fight against crime and corruption. The OSCE is committed to continue its assistance and to work closely with the European Union and international organizations within the framework of the “Friends of Albania”.

9. We commend the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for its commitment to domestic reforms designed to enhance stability and economic prosperity. We reaffirm the OSCE’s determination to support its efforts in this process, and emphasize the importance of continued attention to the development of inter-ethnic relations.

10. We pay tribute to the Governments and peoples of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as most affected countries, as well as those of other neighbouring countries for their hospitality during the Kosovo refugee crisis and for their generosity in shouldering a heavy political and economic burden during this period.

11. Our experiences in South Eastern Europe demonstrate the need for a broader view of the region. We therefore welcome the adoption by the Cologne Ministerial Conference on 10 June 1999 of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, launched on the initiative of the European Union, which plays a leading role in co-operation with other participating and facilitating States, international organizations and institutions. We reinforce the message from the Sarajevo Summit: regional co-operation will serve as a catalyst for the integration of countries in the region into broader structures. The OSCE, under whose auspices the Stability Pact is placed, has a key role to play in contributing to its success, and we task the Permanent Council to develop a regional strategy to support its aims. We welcome the reports provided to us by the Special Co-ordinator for the Stability Pact and the Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. The OSCE will work in close concert with our participating States and with non-governmental organizations in the region.

12. We consider that the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is crucial to achieving lasting peace and justice in the region, and reiterate the obligation of all to co-operate fully with the Tribunal.

13. During this year we have witnessed a significant increase in our co-operation with the five participating States in Central Asia. Political dialogue has gained from a growing number of high-level visits from the Central Asian States to the OSCE and by OSCE representatives to Central Asia. With the continuing support of our partners in Central Asia, the OSCE has now established offices in all five States. This in particular has contributed to an expansion of our co-operative activities in all OSCE dimensions. Reiterating our target of achieving comprehensive security throughout the OSCE area, we strongly welcome these positive developments. We are convinced that necessary progress in the difficult and complex transition process will be stimulated by an increase in our efforts based on co-operation and our common commitments. Strengthening the rule of law, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the development of civil societies constitute one of the centrepieces in our broad framework of co-operative efforts. In this regard, we welcome the process of signing of Memoranda of Understanding between the ODIHR and the Central Asian participating States.

14. We share the concerns expressed by the participating States in Central Asia regarding international terrorism, violent extremism, organized crime and drug and arms trafficking. We agree that national, regional and joint action by the international community is necessary to cope with these threats, including those stemming from areas neighbouring the OSCE participating States. We further recognize the importance of addressing economic and environmental risks in the region, such as issues related to water resources, energy and erosion. We are convinced that strengthening regional co-operation will promote stability and security in Central Asia, and we welcome the active approach taken by the Chairman-in-Office to this effect.

15. Reaffirming our strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, we stress the need for solving the conflicts with regard to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia, particularly by defining the political status of these regions within Georgia. Respect for human rights and development of

joint democratic institutions as well as the prompt, safe and unconditional return of refugees and internally displaced persons will contribute to peaceful settlement of these conflicts. We underscore the importance of taking concrete steps in this direction. We welcome progress reached at this Summit Meeting in the Georgian-Russian negotiations on the reduction of Russian military equipment in Georgia.

16. With regard to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, some progress has been made towards solving the conflict. We emphasize the importance of maintaining and intensifying the dialogue which is now under way. In light of further progress, we believe that an early meeting in Vienna, with participation of experts from this region, should be used to take decisive steps towards a solution. The establishment by the parties concerned of a legal framework for refugee and internally displaced persons housing and property restitution will facilitate the early return of refugees and internally displaced persons to the region. We also urge the early signing of the Georgian-Russian economic rehabilitation agreement and encourage further international economic assistance.

17. We continue to support the leading role of the United Nations in Abkhazia, Georgia. We emphasize the importance of breaking the current deadlock with regard to finding a peaceful solution to the conflict. In this respect we - and in particular those of us who belong to the Friends of the United Nations Secretary-General - are ready to work with the United Nations to prepare and submit a draft document addressing the distribution of constitutional competencies between the central authorities of Georgia and authorities of Abkhazia, Georgia. We reiterate our strong condemnation as formulated in the Budapest and Lisbon Summit Documents, of the “ethnic cleansing” resulting in mass destruction and forcible expulsion of predominantly Georgian population in Abkhazia, Georgia, and of the violent acts in May 1998 in the Gali region. In light of the precarious situation of the returnees, we recommend that a fact-finding mission with the participation of the OSCE and the United Nations be dispatched early next year to the Gali region to assess, *inter alia*, reported cases of continued “ethnic cleansing”. Such a mission would provide a basis for increased international support for the unconditional and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons and contribute to the general stability in the area. We consider the so-called presidential

elections and referendum in Abkhazia, Georgia, this year as unacceptable and illegitimate.

18. We welcome the encouraging steps which have been recently taken in the process of the settlement of the Trans-Dniestrian problem. The Summit in Kiev (July 1999) became an important event in this regard. However, there have been no tangible shifts on the major issue - defining the status of the Trans-Dniestrian region. We reaffirm that in the resolution of this problem the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova should be ensured. We stand for the continuation and deployment of the negotiation process and call on all sides and in particular the Trans-Dniestrian authorities to demonstrate the political will required to negotiate a peaceful and early elimination of the consequences of the conflict. We appreciate the continuation of the mediating efforts of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE in the negotiation process on the future status of the Trans-Dniestrian region within the Republic of Moldova. We take note of the positive role of the joint peacekeeping forces in securing stability in the region.

19. Recalling the decisions of the Budapest and Lisbon Summits and Oslo Ministerial Meeting, we reiterate our expectation of an early, orderly and complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Moldova. In this context, we welcome the recent progress achieved in the removal and destruction of the Russian military equipment stockpiled in the Trans-Dniestrian region of Moldova and the completion of the destruction of non-transportable ammunition.

We welcome the commitment by the Russian Federation to complete withdrawal of the Russian forces from the territory of Moldova by the end of 2002. We also welcome the willingness of the Republic of Moldova and of the OSCE to facilitate this process, within their respective abilities, by the agreed deadline.

We recall that an international assessment mission is ready to be dispatched without delay to explore removal and destruction of Russian ammunition and armaments. With the purpose of securing the process of withdrawal and destruction, we will instruct the Permanent Council to consider the expansion of the mandate of the OSCE Mission to Moldova in terms of ensuring transparency of this process and co-

ordination of financial and technical assistance offered to facilitate withdrawal and destruction. Furthermore, we agree to consider the establishment of a fund for voluntary international financial assistance to be administered by the OSCE.

20. We received the report of the Co-Chairmen of the OSCE Minsk Group on the evolving situation and recent developments connected with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and commend their efforts. We applaud in particular the intensified dialogue between the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose regular contacts have created opportunities to dynamize the process of finding a lasting and comprehensive solution to the problem. We firmly support this dialogue and encourage its continuation, with the hope of resuming negotiations within the OSCE Minsk Group. We also confirm that the OSCE and its Minsk Group, which remains the most appropriate format for finding a solution, stand ready to further advance the peace process and its future implementation, including by providing all necessary assistance to the parties.

21. We welcome the opening of an OSCE Office in Yerevan this year and the decision to open a similar office in Baku. These steps will enable the OSCE to strengthen our co-operation with Armenia and Azerbaijan.

22. We strongly support the work of the Advisory and Monitoring Group in Belarus, which has worked closely with the Belarusian authorities as well as with opposition parties and leaders and NGOs in promoting democratic institutions and compliance with OSCE commitments, thus facilitating a resolution of the constitutional controversy in Belarus. We emphasize that only a real political dialogue in Belarus can pave the way for free and democratic elections through which the foundations for real democracy can be developed. We would welcome early progress in this political dialogue with the OSCE participation, in close co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. We stress the necessity of removing all remaining obstacles to this dialogue by respecting the principles of the rule of law and the freedom of the media.

23. In connection with the recent chain of events in North Caucasus, we strongly reaffirm that we fully acknowledge the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation

and condemn terrorism in all its forms. We underscore the need to respect OSCE norms. We agree that in light of the humanitarian situation in the region it is important to alleviate the hardships of the civilian population, including by creating appropriate conditions for international organizations to provide humanitarian aid. We agree that a political solution is essential, and that the assistance of the OSCE would contribute to achieving that goal. We welcome the willingness of the OSCE to assist in the renewal of a political dialogue. We welcome the agreement of the Russian Federation to a visit by the Chairman-in-Office to the region. We reaffirm the existing mandate of the OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya. In this regard, we also welcome the willingness of the Russian Federation to facilitate these steps, which will contribute to creating conditions for stability, security, and economic prosperity in the region.

24. In a year which has seen the deployment of our largest ever mission, we have been able to welcome the successful conclusion of the work of one of our smallest, the OSCE Representative to the Joint Committee on the Skrunda Radar Station. We congratulate the parties involved in decommissioning the Radar Station on their efforts, undertaken in a spirit of constructive co-operation.

25. We welcome the successful completion of the work of the OSCE Mission to Ukraine. This work has been an important contribution by the OSCE to the process of stabilization in its Autonomous Republic of Crimea. We look forward to continued co-operation between Ukraine and the OSCE, including through the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine, on the basis of its mandate and the Memorandum of Understanding.

26. With a large number of elections ahead of us, we are committed to these being free and fair, and in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments. This is the only way in which there can be a stable basis for democratic development. We appreciate the role of the ODIHR in assisting countries to develop electoral legislation in keeping with OSCE principles and commitments, and we agree to follow up promptly ODIHR's election assessments and recommendations. We value the work of the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly - before, during and after elections - which further contributes to the democratic process. We are committed to secure the full right of persons belonging to minorities to vote and to facilitate the right

of refugees to participate in elections held in their countries of origin. We pledge to ensure fair competition among candidates as well as parties, including through their access to the media and respect for the right of assembly.

27. We commit ourselves to ensuring the freedom of the media as a basic condition for pluralistic and democratic societies. We are deeply concerned about the exploitation of media in areas of conflict to foment hatred and ethnic tension and the use of legal restrictions and harassment to deprive citizens of free media. We underline the need to secure freedom of expression, which is an essential element of political discourse in any democracy. We support the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in its efforts to promote free and independent media.

28. In the year of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and putting the OSCE's Copenhagen commitments into practice, we commit ourselves to actively promote children's rights and interests, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations. We will regularly address the rights of children in the work of the OSCE, including by organizing a special meeting dedicated to children in armed conflict during the year 2000. We will pay particular attention to the physical and psychological well-being of children involved in or affected by armed conflict.

29. The Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities should, under the authority of the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary General and in close co-operation with the relevant OSCE field operations, develop regular reports concerning economic and environmental risks to security. These reports should include questions of promoting public awareness of the relationship between economic and environmental problems and security and the relationship between our Organization and others concerned with the promotion of economic and environmental security within the OSCE area. Such reports will be discussed by the Permanent Council.

30. We reaffirm our commitment to ensure that laws and policies fully respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, in particular in relation to issues affecting cultural identity. Specifically, we emphasize the requirement that laws and policies regarding the educational, linguistic and participatory rights of persons belonging to national minorities conform to applicable international standards and

conventions. We also support the adoption and full implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to promote full equality of opportunities for all. We commend the essential work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We reaffirm that we will increase our efforts to implement the recommendations of the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

31. We deplore violence and other manifestations of racism and discrimination against minorities, including the Roma and Sinti. We commit ourselves to ensure that laws and policies fully respect the rights of Roma and Sinti and, where necessary, to promote anti-discrimination legislation to this effect. We underline the importance of careful attention to the problems of the social exclusion of Roma and Sinti. These issues are primarily a responsibility of the participating States concerned. We emphasize the important role that the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues can play in providing support. A further helpful step might be the elaboration by the Contact Point of an action plan of targeted activities, drawn up in co-operation with the High Commissioner on National Minorities and others active in this field, notably the Council of Europe.

32. In line with our commitment to ensure full equality between women and men, we look forward to an early approval and implementation of an OSCE gender action plan.

33. In the framework of our commitment to further strengthening of the operational capacities of the OSCE Secretariat, we will improve the OSCE employment conditions so that it can better compete for and retain well qualified personnel to enable the Secretariat to carry out its tasks and fulfil its other responsibilities. We will take into account the need for geographic diversity and gender balance when recruiting personnel to OSCE institutions and field operations.

34. We note that a large number of participating States have not been able to implement the 1993 Rome Ministerial Council decision on legal capacity of the OSCE institutions and on privileges and immunities. With a view to improve this situation, a determined effort should be made to review issues related to the implementation of commitments under the 1993 Rome Ministerial decision. To this end, we task the Permanent Council, through an informal open-ended working group to draw up a

report to the next Ministerial Council Meeting, including recommendations on how to improve the situation.

35. To address the challenges in the OSCE area quickly and efficiently new instruments are required. We welcome the establishment, in the Charter, of a Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams (REACT) programme for the OSCE. We commit ourselves to make this concept fully operational at the shortest possible time. We are determined as a matter of priority to implement the decision made in the Charter. We will provide the expertise required and commit the necessary resources according to established procedures. We take note of the letter from the Secretary General to the Permanent Council concerning the rapid deployment of expertise. We request the Permanent Council and the Secretary General to establish a task force within the Conflict Prevention Centre aimed at developing the REACT programme and a budget that will enable REACT to be fully operational by 30 June 2000.

36. We task the Permanent Council and the Secretary General to implement within the same time frame, our decision in the Charter to set up an Operation Centre within the Conflict Prevention Centre, with a small core staff having expertise relevant for all kinds of OSCE operations, which can be expanded rapidly when required, and the decisions made to strengthen the Secretariat and our field operations.

37. We have in the Charter reaffirmed our commitment to the rule of law and stressed the need to combat corruption. We task the Permanent Council to examine how best to contribute to efforts to combat corruption, taking into account efforts of other organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Council of Europe and the United Nations. The results of this work will be reported to the 2000 Ministerial Meeting.

38. The fact that we are meeting in Turkey, which only recently suffered terrible earthquakes, brings home to us the major impact of natural disasters. We need to strengthen the international community's ability to respond to such events, by improving the co-ordination of the efforts of participating States, international organizations and NGOs. We task the Permanent Council to discuss this matter further.

39. We welcome the successful adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The adapted Treaty will provide a greater degree of military stability through a stricter system of limitations, increased transparency and lower levels of conventional armed forces in its area of application. We hope the States Parties will move forward expeditiously to facilitate completion of national ratification procedures, taking into account their common commitment to, and the central importance of, full and continued implementation of the Treaty and its associated documents until and following entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation. Upon entry into force of the Agreement on Adaptation, OSCE participating States with territory in the area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains may apply for accession to the adapted Treaty, thereby providing an important additional contribution to European stability and security.

40. We welcome the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation's efforts to advance security dialogue, co-operation, transparency and mutual confidence, as well as its work on the OSCE concept of comprehensive and indivisible security in accordance with its mandate of Helsinki 1992. We welcome the conclusion of the review process resulting in the adoption of the Vienna Document 1999 on confidence- and security-building measures, a key element of politico-military co-operation and stability. It improves current CSBMs and emphasizes the importance of regional co-operation. We remain fully committed to the principles contained in the Code of Conduct on politico-military aspects of security. We welcome the decision of the FSC to launch a broad and comprehensive discussion on all aspects of the problem of the spread of small arms and light weapons and to study concrete measures to deal with this issue, in order to respond to the challenge to peace and stability stemming from the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of these weapons.

41. We note with satisfaction that the negotiations on regional stability, as foreseen under Article V of Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace have entered their substantive phase. A successful outcome to the on-going Article V negotiations would make a significant contribution to security and stability in the region. We urge the states participating in the Article V negotiations to aim to conclude their work by the end of 2000. We appreciate the OSCE's active role in facilitating the

implementation of the Agreement on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control negotiated under Annex 1-B of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

42. We reaffirm the significance of the Open Skies Treaty: in this respect, convinced that trial flights are in no way a substitute for the regime of observation flights as set forth in the Treaty, we urge early completion of the process of its ratification and entry into force.

43. We note the widespread human suffering caused by anti-personnel mines and note the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We also note the entry into force on 3 December 1998 of the Amended Mines Protocol to the UN Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects. We reaffirm our support for international co-operation in promoting global humanitarian action against anti-personnel mines, including promoting mine clearance activities, mine awareness programs, and the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of mine victims.

44. We take note of the report of the Chairman-in-Office on discussions held this year with regard to reviewing the scale and criteria for financing OSCE activities and instruct the Permanent Council to continue its discussions with a view to reaching agreement before the OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in November/December 2000, so that this agreement can be applied after 31 December 2000, in accordance with the decision taken at the 1997 Copenhagen Ministerial Council Meeting.

45. We reconfirm the importance we attach to the relationship with our Partners for Co-operation as set out in the Charter for European Security. In light of our relationship with our Mediterranean Partners, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, we reaffirm that strengthening security and co-operation in the Mediterranean area is of major importance to the stability in the OSCE area. We therefore intend to enhance our dialogue and joint activities with them. We will

furthermore strengthen our relationship with Japan and the Republic of Korea. We appreciate the contributions made by Japan to OSCE activities.

46. We express our gratitude to the High Commissioner on National Minorities, Mr. Max van der Stoel, for his willingness to continue in his position until a new High Commissioner on National Minorities has been appointed at the latest at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Vienna in November/December 2000.

47. The next Ministerial Council will take place in Vienna in November/December 2000, and will take a decision on the time and place of the next meeting of the Heads of State or Government of the OSCE participating States.

48. We welcome and accept the offer of Romania to exercise the function of Chairman-in-Office in 2001.